

Reflecting on Kejawen: Javanese Esoteric Teachings in Indonesian National Development

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Abstract

Kejawen as a concept of spirituality arose out of ancient Javanese society. Many Western scholars have used the term 'Javanese mysticism' to refer to Kejawen teachings, which focus on inward rather than outward religious expression and feeling. Kejawen teaching offers an esoteric understanding of religion and spirituality, one that seems to circulate mainly outside formal religious traditions. This paper demonstrates the significance of Kejawen teaching in spiritual, psychological, and social development in Indonesia, suggesting it has especial relevance to issues of peace and violence. Placing Kejawen in its context, this study shows that the national development in Indonesia after independence was influenced by the esoteric ideas of Kejawen, as portrayed in the national motto "unity in diversity". This expression resembles the post-independence state ideology of Pancasila. Through analysis of key nationalist texts, themes linked to elements of Kejawen teachings are identified and analysed in this study. This is done by analysing key texts, including Soekarno's independence speech, Pancasila, and other relevant materials from various available sources. The reader will find out more about the need for comprehensive symbolic and resource-based recognition of Kejawen teachings in Indonesian society.

Keywords: Kejawen; Religions; Esoteric teachings; Spirituality; Pancasila.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In this study, *Kejawen* is looked at as a set of spiritual practices and beliefs that arose out of ancient Javanese society. Many Western scholars have used the term 'Javanese mysticism' to refer to *Kejawen* teachings, which focus on inward rather than outward religious expression and feeling.¹ *Kejawen* teaching offers an esoteric understanding of religion and spirituality, one that seems to circulate mainly outside formal religious traditions. Other great esoteric traditions, like Sufism, Christian spirituality, and Jewish Kabbalah share many similar ideas to *Kejawen* teachings and require deep attention from practitioners to the essence of religion itself, represented as a state of unity or oneness with God and the universe.²

All outward rituals and liturgies are viewed as only preliminary preparations, their form being secondary to their function as a means towards attaining the true spiritual path of wholeness. Rituals and beliefs, according to *Kejawen* principles, should not be regarded as the fundamental precursor to action but as broad principles or forms of guidance that help to

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¹ Agus Salim, "Javanese religion, Islam or syncretism: comparing Woodward's Islam in Java and Beatty's Varieties of Javanese Religion," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 3, no. 2 (2013): 223.

² Damar Shashangka. *Induk Ilmu Kejawen Wirid Hidayat Jati* (Jakarta: Dolphin, 2014), 84.

come in touch with and observe God's existence through ongoing psychological struggle.³

Kejawen teaching does not deal with the debate of how to worship; instead, it discusses the similarity of the fundamental principles of all religions. In its teaching, *Kejawen* encourages self-observation of the mind, which allows one to study the inward psychological problems of human thinking and feeling.⁴ *Kejawen* followers believe that meditative silence and focusing the mind can bring stability to one's psyche, and that in turn a stable psyche or mind will be far removed from thoughts of violence.⁵ This is because they view violence as the result of division caused by the ego. There are strong echoes in this also, of the meditative practices of Buddhism.

The understanding and practice of *Kejawen* differ according to the person, group, and cultural setting. Some of the practitioners incorporate the teaching of Hinduism into *Kejawen* believe, some synthesize the teaching of Buddha into their corpus and others may insert Islamic elements into it. For instance, *Kejawen* practitioner who lives in Yogyakarta would likely use Islamic terminology to explain *Kejawen* teaching. It is because the religious lexicon in Yogyakarta has been pervaded by Islamic terminology, resulted from Islamic kingdoms which were flourished in the last 14th century. On the other hand, people of *Osing* in Banyuwangi would not use the same terminology as people in Yogyakarta just because there is not much Islamic influence in their belief as people in Yogyakarta has, rather they do have strong Hindu background. The nexus of *Kejawen* teaching is impossible to delineate. It is because every complexities and nuances are the outsets of centuries of relationship and interaction between theologies, cultures, and idiosyncrasies. Even now, the construction of *Kejawen* is still ongoing, responding to the contemporary situation in the social.⁶

Indonesia as a highly religious society often employs religious and spiritual concepts to justify its human rights perspective.⁷ In addition, human rights debates at the international or national level, are often limited to the discussion of human rights as a legal instrument without looking at the religious concepts of humans as beings with innate rights derived from their spirituality and connection with God.⁸ In a country with a fervent religious climate like Indonesia, human rights discussions are supposed to be discussed using the 'indigenous language', which is supposed to match and also help to communicate the multi-dimensional morality of the Indonesian people.⁹ This study will show that after independence national

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Dahlia Lubis, "Religious Education for Aliran Kebatinan Community in Contemporary Indonesia." *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 10, no. 2 (2019): 276.

⁷ Gerrie ter Haar. Religion and development, what's in two names: symposium on the 10th anniversary of the chair of religion and development (The Hague: International Institute of Social Studies, 2009), 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Ter Haar, *op.cit.*, 10.

development in Indonesia was deeply embedded in the esoteric ideas of *Kejawen*, as portrayed in the motto “unity in diversity”. This expression resembles the new state ideology of Pancasila. As an instrument for national development, a single pan-national language, Bahasa Indonesia, was created and taught in schools as the official language, which made cross-community and inter-regional communication possible as stipulated in Law No. 24 of 2009.¹⁰ Along with this, a form of enshrined cultural wisdom, involving the coexistence of major religious communities and beliefs, within the nation adopted these kinds of plural-ist and inclusive forms of ideology, expressed in *Pancasila*, and arguably rooted in *Kejawen*.

1.2. Purpose

This research paper discusses the significance of *Kejawen* teaching as both spiritual concept and method in modern Indonesian society. The recognition of Indigenous faiths has been rather slow since independence. In 2016 the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia, in a judicial review case No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016, granted a lawsuit by indigenous communities. The court verdict states that indigenous people can use their indigenous religious identity in civil registration, for example, on the Indonesian civil identity card, the Kartu Tanda Penduduk (KTP).¹¹ Subsequently, only six major religions in Indonesia are recognized administratively by the government. With the ruling of the Constitutional Court on that case, indigenous people can enjoy their religious rights in a civil manner like in a marriage ceremony. However, this administrative recognition is inadequate for *Kejawen* teaching and other indigenous faiths. Indonesian government understands indigenous faith only as an identity, not as a knowledge whose survival is dependent on the distribution of resources which is through the dissemination of knowledge. Thus, symbolic recognition is less important than comprehensive recognition.

Historically, *Kejawen* is not classified as “religion” (*agama*) rather it falls under the term “believe” (*kepercayaan*). The dichotomy of religion and belief has been a debatable issue since Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (hereinafter, Indonesian Constitution) included those two phrases. Following the legal uncertainties which are arousing from a rather obscure choice of epithet, discriminations are taking place which is omitting *Kejawen* adherence and other indigenous believers from the Indonesian religious-legal framework. It is later exacerbated by the enactment of Presidential Decree No. 1/PNPS/1965 Presidential Decree No. 1/PNPS/1965 concerning the Prevention of Abuse and/or Blasphemy of Religion or famously known as Anti-Blasphemy Law. In the minutes of the hearing (*risalah sidang*), Samsul Maarif as an expert was expounding the nature of politics of religion in Indonesia to the court. He argues that the discourse of religion and believe mentioned above has been employed by a

¹⁰ Law No. 24 of 2009 concerning National Flag, Language, Emblem, and Anthem, Art 2.

¹¹ Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia, No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016, para 3.13.5.

religious majority group to gain political power over a religious minority group who is categorized as “*penghayat kepercayaan*” which is including *Kejawen*. As a result, a state institution that has been shaped by this politics of religion will favor “*agama*” and gradually ostracizing “*kepercayaan*” from the Indonesian social and political realm.¹²

The paradox is that *Kejawen* teaching has historically been excluded from Indonesian religious orthodoxy since the nation-state was proclaimed in 1945. The survival of a *Kejawen* narrative is preserved by relatively few individuals and groups. Therefore, it is uncertain whether *Kejawen* narratives and esoteric traditions can continue to be reproduced in the future. *Kejawen* teachings are disseminated only through a local, informal agency. Today it is common people, like village elders, spiritual teachers, and independent practitioners who are the only remaining sources of *Kejawen* teachings.¹³ The teaching of *Kejawen* knowledge of the esoteric rests in the closed and more or less exclusive relationship between individual teachers (the guru) and individual students (the murid).¹⁴ The need for this relationship between teacher and student makes *Kejawen* teaching circulate rather slowly, hardly reaching the masses.

1.3. Method

This research paper relies mostly on secondary data for analysis. Although it is mainly literature-based research, this is supplemented by the use of visual and online materials, as well as a selected number of open-ended and semi-structural interviews. The author decided to employ semi-structural interviews to bridge the gap between the author’s preconception regarding the problem and the perspective of the source. The interviews were conducted flexibly, which means the question is not intended to be answered rigidly by the interviewees. The question is only meant to be as a *terminus a quo*, in which the interviewer can be flexible in addressing the issue.¹⁵ The author interviewed two interviewees via Zoom call. They are Romo Suryo, a *Kejawen* teacher from Paguyuban Sambung Rasa and Mbah Harjo, a spiritual guide and community healer. The interviews had been conducted in the span of 2 months from May 2020 until June 2020.

The analysis is conducted in a dialogic manner that moves interchangeably between reviewing scholarly and other literature, data and information from interviews, and social media, alongside some experience-based observations. Although the selection of literature is subjective, its selection and interpretation have been guided by the need to address the main focus of the study, set by the research question and sub-questions. To ensure data saturation, the author has therefore tried to locate the most

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Clifford Geertz. *The religion of Java* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1976), 328.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ See Williams Adams, “Conducting Semi Structured Interviews,” in *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, ed. Kathryn E. Newcomer, Harry P. Hatry, Joseph S. Wholey (San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass, 2015), 493.

relevant available research and data in both English and Bahasa, highlighting the relevance of content through text analysis, coding, and matching of keywords.¹⁶

1.4. Theoretical Framework

This section provides a theoretical framework for the rest of the study. The moral dimensions of *Kejawen* teachings and its philosophy are discussed and shown to have been a profound element influencing the construction of Indonesia's moral standards as a nation. Since modernity and globalization often repress the moral identity of individual societies, it follows that Indonesia has the right to determine its national perspectives on moral philosophy and human rights, based on its people's religious, spiritual, and cultural values.¹⁷ At the same time, a level of openness to the universality of beliefs should also be encouraged as part of nationalism, since the global movement of ideas, particularly regarding moral philosophy, has become almost inevitable.

Like Buddhism and many other 'spiritual' religious traditions, *Kejawen* teaching stresses the ideals of psychological development and the freedom of human beings from fear and suffering. It concerns itself with the inner development of the human psyche,¹⁸ and in a sense aims to observe the problem of human suffering through working on the basis of emotions like fear, grief, and sadness, as well as with situations of loneliness and insecurity. *Kejawen* teaching believes that human suffering is the outcome of separation, which means the separation of the self or the ego. When human beings operate through their ego, their actions become self-centered. A self-centered mindset is viewed as fertile ground for conflict and vice to be manifested.¹⁹

The importance of dealing with human suffering is because of the social problems that suffering is believed to lead to, including violence, conflict, greed, corruption, aggression, and the abuse of weaker others. Ideally, therefore, *Kejawen* teachings consider self-reflection as potentially a wider solution for moral and ethical problems in society, contributing in this way to a corresponding formulation of a more just and inclusive society. The teachings thus have goals of individual spiritual advancement, which in turn is taken to form the basis on which collective spiritual development can be constructed, at the level of society. Therefore, *Kejawen* teaching encourages individual spiritual development before collective spiritual development.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Archer. "Qualitative data analysis: A primer on core approaches." in *Online Readings in Research Methods*. ed. S. Kramer. A. Fynn. S. Laher. & H. Janse van Vuuren (Johannesburg: Psychological Society of South Africa, 2018), 7.

¹⁷ Ter Haar, *op.cit.*, 12.

¹⁸ Shashangka, *op.cit.*, 107.

¹⁹ Sulkhan Chakim. "Dakwah Islam dan Spiritualitas Kejawen," *Komunika: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi* 1, no. 2 (2007): 258.

Most writings on the *Kejawen* teachings, emphasize the principle of the 'unity of existence' (*manunggaling kawulo gusti*) which is seen as the central tenet of *Kejawen* teaching.²⁰ The principle of *manunggaling kawulo gusti* postulates the totality of world existence which connects the ontology of the natural world, with the notion of human thought and rationality, human imagination, and the existence of the soul. This principle of the oneness of all existence views human beings as micro-models of wider existence (*jagat kecil*) and the natural world as a macro-model of human existence (*jagat besar*).²¹ These models are a reflection of how everything is interconnected, and *Kejawen* teaching intends to explain the patterns involved, and in this way show the connections between 'everything'.

This principle can be described through the story of the infamous Javanese-*Kejawen* sage, Syekh Siti Jenar. In the story, Syekh Siti Jenar received enlightenment in the form of unique knowledge that said he was a God or Allah. He was charged with heresy by the Islamic monarch at that time because he violated the first tenet of Syariah (*shariah*, sharia) which is the act of shirk or recognizing another god besides the one true god. This story was recounted in folklore as the story of a prominent scholar who went mad, because he kept shouting "I am a god", allegedly after receiving the mystical knowledge of oneness. He was deemed as a troublemaker because after challenging the religious tradition in that time as well as contesting the authority of religious leaders. Besides, he was regarded as a revolutionary figure of true religious teaching.²²

In the story, and perhaps in real life, he was decapitated for heresy and a miracle happened. His body disappeared a moment after his head fell off, and his splattered blood on the ground miraculously shaped the Arabic word for Allah, the name of God. This very folkloric story postulates that the teaching of the 'unity of existence' within the Javanese community has a history of martyrdom, one that arises out of a mismatch – or misunderstanding - between the insight of oneness, and the definition of correct conduct in the Islamic religion, through the Syariah. The story is also interesting, since, in many ways, this clash of understandings continues between *Kejawen* and more formal versions of Islam even today, as this study will discuss.²³

Furthermore, *Manunggaling kawulo gusti* can be defined as total awareness of the oneness of perception, which means the actuality of one's existence without denying the existence of the other. *Kejawen* teaching recognizes the principle of *manunggaling kawulo gusti* as a state of consciousness that is developed by a set of rituals that symbolize the quality of realizing one's existence. So, *manunggaling kawulo gusti* is not an achievement but a state of adjusting and balancing the gaze of perception towards being able to perceive the unity of existence. It is also analogous

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Andi Asmara, "Dimensi Alam Kehidupan Dan Manunggaling Kawula-gusti Dalam Serat Jatimurti," *Atavisme* 16, no. 2 (2013): 154.

²² Achmad Chodjim. *Syekh Siti Jenar Makrifat dan Makna Kehidupan*, (Jakarta: Serambi, 2007), 11.

²³ *Ibid.*

with the concept of the perceiver is the perceived as well as the observer being observed.²⁴

This principle of the unity of existence resonates with the concept coined by Jiddu Krishnamurti of 'seeing what actually is'. Krishnamurti sees truth as total awareness and distinct from the kind of thoughts and sensations that come from the conscious thinking process and the external senses. For instance, one sees trees and mountains which are there as a fact. Furthermore, one says that trees and mountains are beautiful, or one wants to go hiking because trees and mountains are pretty. This is the product of conscious thinking processes and the external senses.²⁵

Krishnamurti argues that the state of total awareness requires silence from thinking processes and the senses, as a precursor of understanding 'what actually is', a notion similar to 'the unity of existence'. On the other hand, *manunggaling kawulo gusti* also explains the totality of all existence without a sense of external separation, resulting from what psychiatry calls 'the ego'. In this psychological or spiritual state of total awareness, the ego is also perceived so that it cannot function to separate the self, because the ego has been paralyzed by the gaze of inner awareness that has unveiled how this separation works. However, the death of ego does not mean the non-existence of ego; it means sovereignty over one's own ego. One may slip back into egoistical thinking and action, but one can readjust and rebalance that act of ego with a sense of remembrance (*eling*) which is able to turn an egotistical state back towards a state of total awareness of the 'unity of everything'.²⁶

Manunggaling kawulo gusti, as a grand, holistic concept of unity, can be useful in explaining individual psychological and religious development. It can also be used as an alternative perspective for finding solutions for violence, injustices, and conflicts in society. In the Republic, as Plato explains, justice is tied to a 'quality of the soul', and Plato places considerable emphasis on the importance of the individual's internal psychic state, as well as their actions and an individual's conduct in striving for just outcomes. Plato argues that there are internal and external aspects to justice. He explains that external acts of injustice will eventually disturb the internal balance of the soul, upsetting the modality of one's own happiness. Furthermore, according to Klosko, Plato also explains the characteristics of the just and unjust soul as the metaphysical foundation of his entire political theory.²⁷

On the other hand, *manunggaling kawulo gusti* differs from Plato's notions of justice and injustice, since it explains the relationship between the harmony of the soul or the psyche and acts of injustice the other way around. Whereas in Plato's Republic, he focuses on how an act of injustice

²⁴ Asmara, *loc.cit.*

²⁵ J Krishnamurti – Official Channel, "The art of listening, seeing and learning," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ke32Z2KkS6w>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ George Klosko, "Plato's Political Philosophy," *The Routledge Companion to Social and Political Philosophy*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 8.

or justice shapes the psyche or soul, he does not suggest the psyche or soul is shaping the external acts, reversing the relationship between consciousness and deeds.²⁸ Whereas Plato postulates that the quality of one's soul will be reflected in the form of external deeds, his concern is from the perspective of external consequences of internal states, rather than from the perspective of the cause of internal states themselves.

In contrast, the concept of *manunggaling kawulo gusti*, especially in its mechanisms and methodology in teachings reflects an understanding that a just soul is the product of a perpetual inner struggle, involving perpetual efforts to realise the unity of existence. Therefore, a person behaves justly because he or she has managed to settle their inner conflicts and master the ego. To put this simply, both concepts emphasize the importance of the quality of the human soul. The *Kejawen* principle of *manunggaling kawulo gusti* starts with teachings about gaining first-person insights and perspectives into how to be a just soul through internal struggle and religious exercise. Plato's concept provides a second-person perspective for knowing or judging those who may be 'possessed' of a just soul; the focus is not on inner reflection, from the outside inwards, but on detecting the inner state of mind from external actions.

Interestingly, Plato's elaboration of the concept of the quality of the soul is implied in anthropological approaches to knowledge, which tend to look at external empirical reality to deduce inner values, cultural ideas, beliefs, and psychological states of peoples. Plato especially analyses the characteristic of just and unjust souls through their religious attitudes. The attitudes of a just soul become embodied in the set of ritual values, which in turn determine how one recognizes that character as reflecting a just, or an unjust, soul.²⁹ On the other hand, *manunggaling kawulo gusti* presupposes a spiritual mode of being that can produce a character that has the quality of a just soul without the influence of external human agency. Instead, a just soul arises through the agency of the individual mind on itself, through the exercise of awareness and self-rule.

The use of metaphysical reflection to address social problems is not a popular approach to development in modern times, although the commonly used expression in social movement circles 'be the change you want to see in the world', which is attributed to Gandhi, does reflect something of that quality. Also, in the thinking of Thomas Aquinas the same significance of theology in the construction of social and political philosophy, can be seen. This suggests that it is widely considered plausible to connect religious assumption with the social and political behaviour of people in society, including in a society heavily influenced by religious and spiritual values like Indonesia.

The concept of *manunggaling kawulo gusti* could, in theory, be an effective tool of esoteric spiritual learning, to shape personal social, and political behaviour in the direction of greater tolerance, democracy and peace. In his famous *Summa Theologiae*, influenced by Neo-Platonism in his

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Klosko, *op.cit.*, 6.

view of the hierarchal cosmology of human beings, Aquinas combines the Christian cosmological view with a Neo-Platonic cosmological view.³⁰ In *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas cites the story of Dionysus going into the underworld. He suggests the idea parallels that of human beings' journey from the lower worlds of desires into the higher existence of the gods. In fact, the concept of *manunggaling kawulo gusti* is the product of theological acculturation between Islam and indigenous Javanese spirituality.

In *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas also syncretizes two sets of beliefs - the Christian and the Neo-Platonic understandings of the relations between physical reality and the realm of the spiritual, beyond physical reality.³¹ Also, in *manunggaling kawulo gusti*, there is an elaboration of the concept of *tawhid* (oneness of God) also found in Islamic theology. Aquinas was trying to harmonize philosophical and theological thinking in an environment where Greek literature and art were prominent, and Christianity was the chief religion which is similar to the construction of *Kejawen*.

2. Result and Analysis

2.1. An Esoteric Perspective on National Unity

2.1.1. Introduction

This section discusses the position of *Kejawen* as an esoteric form of belief, within the national ideology of *Pancasila*, which as explained in an earlier chapter was the basis for the ideology of nationalism in Indonesia. This chapter uncovers how *Pancasila* has connected philosophy and religion into the Indonesian national framework in a way that is analogous to the nature of esotericism. In addition, *Pancasila* carries the doctrine of "secret of state" or *Arcana Imperii* which is placing the philosophy of *Pancasila* as a foundation where all the national political project refers to.³² Every nation inspires its collective political struggle not only through material ends as well as through spiritual ends. The latter proves to be effective because it plays with human impulsive emotion. Using spiritual ends for national political struggle is best portrayed when Soekarno instills the idea of the unity of existence (*Manunggaling kawulo gusti*) into *Pancasila* and the Indonesian national motto (*Bhinneka tunggal ika*) which means unity in diversity, responding to the multi-religious and cultural outlook of Indonesia.

2.1.2. Background and Context of *Pancasila*

Pancasila was established as a political consensus of the Republic of Indonesia which reflects the aspirations of the Indonesian people. As a political consensus, *Pancasila* also accommodates the metaphysical and

³⁰ Paul Sigmund, "Aquinas," *The Routledge Companion to Social and Political Philosophy* Routledge, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Miguel Vatter, "Esoteric Writing between Mysticism and Science," *Perspectives on Political Science*, Routledge, 44, no. 3 (2015): 183.

spiritual views of the people. The problem of the existence of humankind, the world, and the god is enshrined within the virtue of Pancasila.³³ Thus, Pancasila could be approached from the metaphysical and spiritual point of view, through the principle of *genetivus objectivus* which is placed Pancasila as a philosophical object that derives its values from religious and spiritual traditions that embraced by the people.³⁴ Also, in Indonesia's legal tradition, *Pancasila* is recognized as *groundnorm* or fundamental norm which presupposes legal norms that we find in the law and regulation. *Pancasila* can be regarded as the philosophical basis of the Indonesian Constitution.³⁵

Interestingly, Soekarno postulates that the first principle (clause, precept) of Pancasila which is belief in one god derives from indigenous value. The question is, could the philosophical basis of the first principle of Pancasila adopts *Kejawen* view on unity of existence? Based on the discussion with Romo Suryo, he believes that Soekarno is a fervent follower of *Kejawen* and understands the notion of *manunggaling kawulo gusti* or unity of existence. Romo Suryo argues that Soekarno always acknowledges various philosophical traditions of Indonesian people. In addition, Mbah Harjo stated that the first principle of *Pancasila* represents *Kejawen's* view on god or the ultimate truth and believes that the founding fathers of Indonesia, including Soekarno, are aware of the notion.³⁶ Soekarno tends to syncretize different world view in the name of national unity. It was proven when he coined the term of *Nasakom* which is translated as nationalism, religion, and communism. This concept was intended to ease the political contestation in that time when nationalists, religious people, and communists are contesting in politics. The connection of *Pancasila* as political consensus that carries the doctrine of *Arcana Imperii* and esoteric teaching of *Kejawen* is best described by the argument of Arthur Melzer:

“esotericism in philosophy seems to be the analogon of the *arcana imperii* in politics, as it is the analogon of the mysteries in most religions: in all these cases, the secret is, in reality, the basis of the claims to rule and to authority on the part of the few (philosophers, statesmen, priests) over the many.”³⁷

Moreover, *Pancasila* has a significant metaphysical component that deals with form or ideal which implies its perpetual function to formulate an ideal future and actuality which implies the existence of truth. The actuality of Pancasila refers to the actuality of god which is deemed to be the highest form of reality. Thus, individuals or groups can utilize Pancasila to reflect on current reality and its problems, hence, one can formulate a form or ideal in order to achieve the actuality, in this case, is the actuality of god which is

³³ Suhartoyo Harjosatoto, "Refleksi Metafisik Atas Pancasila." *Jurnal Filsafat* 1, no. 1 (1996): 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Retno Saraswati, "Problematika Hukum Undang-Undang No.12 Tahun 2011 tentang Pembentukan Peraturan Perundang-Undangan." *Jurnal Yustisia* 2, no. 3 (2013): 98.

³⁶ Eanisme TV, "Mahasiswa S2 Belanda Bertanya Serius Pada Mbah Harjo." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vuXTebmOxM&ab_channel=eanismeTV

³⁷ Vatter, *op.cit.*, 183.

the highest form of reality.³⁸ Yet, the failure to understand the salience point about the nature of god or the highest form of reality doom the process in the wrong direction. Thus, religious teaching plays a great deal of importance in understanding the proper religiosity, what means to be religious and what is the characteristic of a religious person. *Kejawen* teaching could lend a great deal of lexicon to understand the notion of religious life. A predisposition of its syncretic and apolitical nature could elevate *Kejawen* teaching above the problem of division and exclusiveness.

2.1.3. *Kejawen*, State Ideology and National Development

After Indonesia seized independence in the year 1945, three national figures namely Soekarno, Mohammad Yamin, and Soepomo formulated a state ideology in the form of philosophical principles known as Pancasila.³⁹ The Pancasila contains five principles which are (i) belief in one God, (ii) humanitarianism, (iii) national unity, (iv) consensual democracy, and (v) social justice. Those underlying principles are specifically enshrined in the fourth paragraph (*alinea*) of the preamble to the Indonesian Constitution. Pancasila is considered the fundamental norm of the state, which means the policies and practices of the state (the government) should adopt and refer to the principles contained in Pancasila. Even though Pancasila is considered a national ideology, the formulation of its principles cannot be separated from the cultural setting in which it was formulated. That means the national spirits contained in Pancasila which is presumably adopted by all Indonesians are derived from their own cultural and religious perspective. The goal of Pancasila was explicitly to bring together and compile all cultural perspectives from numerous ethnic groups in the country and label them as national culture or *kebudayaan nasional*.⁴⁰

In the realm of philosophical inquiry, Sukanto Notonagoro finds that Pancasila is underpinned by three principles: the cultural principle, the religious principle, and the state principle. These principles correspond to the formulation of Pancasila and the conceptual basis of its various principles/clauses. For instance, the cultural principle of *musyawarah* or (discussion, deliberation) is enshrined in the fourth principle of Pancasila and later became the model for the legislative system in Indonesia. Historically, *musyawarah* is a concept that arises from the tendency of Indonesian society to settle conflicts publicly. In addition, Islamic scholars, like Nurcholis Madjid, have postulated that Pancasila has been “the meeting point” of all the worldviews of the Indonesian people, including between the religious views of the people.⁴¹ Pancasila is considered to be designed to accommodate the spiritual nature of religious views to fit into the public

³⁸ Harjosatoto, *op.cit.*, 7.

³⁹ Ali Mudhofir, “Pancasila Sebagai Sistem Kefilsafatan,” *Jurnal Filsafat* 1, no. 1 (1996): 10.

⁴⁰ M Sastraprateja, “Filsafat Pancasila Dalam Kehidupan Bangsa,” *Jurnal Filsafat* 26, (1996): 24.

⁴¹ Syarif Hidayatullah, “Notonagoro dan Religiuitas Pancasila,” *Jurnal Filsafat*, 16, no. 1 (2006): 38.

realm. The aim was that the spiritual nature of religion, especially the common unity concerning the desirability of peace, would contribute to the formulation of social conditioning to form the nation as a whole. As Sukanto Notonagoro suggests, the spiritual dimension of Pancasila would especially apply to political life. In his rather abstract understanding of the spirituality of Pancasila, Notonagoro was trying to expound the view that political life in Indonesia should be exercised in accordance with human needs. These include cultural and religious needs, involving strong cultural and religious attachments that are important for developing an individual identity.⁴²

However, the implementation of Pancasila throughout Indonesia's development has been deemed unsatisfactory. During the years from 1967 to 1985, Soeharto ordered the operationalization of Pancasila in terms of policies and practices.⁴³ One instance of unsatisfactory changes in reiterating the principles of Pancasila was when President Soeharto used Pancasila to legitimize his authoritarian rule and to silence his political opposition. The Soeharto administration then becomes the sole interpreter of whether or not a political action is considered in accordance with Pancasila principles. By 1985, Soeharto set up an indoctrination program around Pancasila democracy and its implementation. This program is mandatory for junior and senior high schools through a course called Pancasila Moral Education (Pendidikan Moral Pancasila/PMP).⁴⁴ Soeharto's effort to make Pancasila into the sole guiding philosophy of post-independence social and political practices was filled with controversy, however, and especially regarding the position of religion and political opposition.⁴⁵

The issue of multiculturalism, or cultural pluralism, has to be taken seriously because the movement of ideas leads to a reconstruction of ideas. In fact, the right to develop one own culture and be free from persecution is indispensable according to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Together with its twin sister, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the rights of an individual in a liberal democratic system are secured,⁴⁶ it is also the beginning of the age of secular nationalism. However, Modern Indonesia suffers from confusion around how to reconstructs and reformulate ideas of public, private, and national morality. Indonesia's religious beliefs emerged from the various moral and spiritual traditions of the world.⁴⁷ Ironically, for a society as religious as Indonesia, the anti-colonial mindset that challenged western traditions also introduced the idea of the nation-state, as the basis of Indonesian

⁴² Hidayatullah, *loc.cit.*

⁴³ Donald Weatherbee, "Indonesia: The Pancasila State," *Southeast Asian Affairs*, (1985): 133.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Law No. 11 of 2005 concerning Ratification of International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, Art. 1 (1).

⁴⁷ Haar, *op.cit.*, 10.

constitutional and secular values.⁴⁸ On the other hand, people in Indonesia had strong religious and cultural values that would prove resistant to secular nationalism.

In subtle ways, *Kejawen* teachings have contributed to the formulation of ideal society through practice and custom. However, *Kejawen* teachings cannot simply be equated with Javanese culture. It is a misunderstanding to think that *Kejawen* teaching belongs to Javanese people. It might be interpreted that *Kejawen* deals with human problems, especially, psychological problems. It advocates inner healing, how to deal with inner conflict so a person who practices *Kejawen* would not manifest conflict in society.⁴⁹ Like other religions which originated from a particular geographical region. The problem with *Kejawen*'s inclusivity is where it came from as many labeled religions and philosophies. It might seem strange to see Western people adopt *Kejawen* teachings, yet, it is quite normal to see Javanese people adopt *Kejawen*. However, many Western figures like Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Alan Watts, and current popular spiritual guru Eckhart Tolle derived some part of their teachings from eastern spirituality. Thus, by implication, *Kejawen* is inclusive and can also be studied by all human beings regardless of their personal or national backgrounds. In addition, the context of *Kejawen* teaching can be found in other religions but with different elaborations, reflecting its syncretic nature.⁵⁰

2.1.4. Interpretation of Pancasila

Pancasila as a philosophical system and state ideology becomes the academic and political entry point to insert *Kejawen* teaching into Indonesian political and social consensus.⁵¹ It is possible to reinterpret Pancasila because its nature is dynamic and perpetual.⁵² Pancasila is not a mere state ideology, but it is an ideology of process in achieving people's freedom.⁵³ Thus, any modification or development is possible to be realized. From its creation, Pancasila has been an ideology of the people which means its legitimacy depends on the sovereignty of the people.⁵⁴ Thus, people must involve in interpreting Pancasila in order to achieve freedom and welfare which is also the foundation of democracy.

The different perspectives of freedom and welfare as well as its implementation between nationalist and *Kejawen* teaching are becoming debatable discourse. The discourses have not been mediated properly

⁴⁸ Yuwono Sudarsono. "Pokok-Pokok Pikiran Penjabaran Hak Azasi Berdasarkan Pancasila," *Jurnal Filsafat* 1, no. 1 (1992): 22.

⁴⁹ Chakim, *op.cit.*, 262.

⁵⁰ Sulistiyono Susilo and Ibnu Satyo, "Common Identity Framework of Cultural Knowledge and Practices of Javanese Islam," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 6, no. 2 (2016): 162.

⁵¹ Sudharmono, "Pancasila Sebagai Ideologi Terbuka," *Jurnal Filsafat* 22, (1995): 1.

⁵² Neainun Naim. "Islam dan Pancasila Rekonstruksi Pemikiran Nurcholis Madjid," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 10, no. 2 (2015): 452.

⁵³ A.M.W Pranarka, "Epistemologi Pancasila," *Jurnal Filsafat* 26 (1996): 20.

⁵⁴ Sri Soeprapto, "Konsep Muhammad Hatta Tentang Implementasi Pancasila Dalam Perspektif Etika Pancasila," *Jurnal Filsafat* 23, no. 2 (2013): 107.

because the innate nature of the nation-state is forcing different beliefs and cultures to merge under the rule of the state. Like all formerly colonized nations, Indonesia does not have many options to bind its vast territory. A predisposition of a nation-state to merge different identities into one rule is problematic, it could also perceive as an illusion. Because the failure to uphold justice caused by unequal relation whether it is social, political, and economic would be a threat to ruler legitimacy. Whatever form of state and government one has, it does not really matter, Because the real problem is always the failure to establish peace and justice which leads to division. The unaddressed division will inevitably bring instability as well as violence.

Modernity and the *weltanschauung*, or worldview, of neoliberalism, can be translated into the methodology of benchmarking national country-by-country achievements. A state deemed 'successful' or 'developed' is always so considered because of the accumulation of wealth, total production, advancement of technology, and so-called political stability and democracy. These kinds of the benchmark can obstruct recognition of the rights of minorities.⁵⁵ However, national growth and international rank can become political tools to deceive people into believing that their country is on the right track and is making 'great strides' forward. Politicians find that their legitimacy can depend on how their record in economic growth, employment, and material progress, is perceived. This encourages them to produce the desired economic and material results, rather than to focus on their own responsibility as state agents, to emancipate minorities and those who are disadvantaged from discrimination and suffering.

This way of thinking serves different political purposes. It has also shifted a state that claimed to be grounded in morally good attributes, a state whose core principle was to protect the dignity of the person, into different trajectories. The first principle of Pancasila has lost its meaning, as the notion of "believing in one god" as the principle says has been twisted away from its previous, inclusive meaning. For political convenience, the politics of religion has moved towards a strict monotheistic view of God, under the influence of ultra-Conservative Islamic thoughts. They believe that the first principle of Pancasila is derived from the concept of *Tawhid* or the oneness of God, which departs from all notions of diverse manifestations of God in other forms of religion. Thus, Pancasila is now deemed to be inspired solely with reference to the Holy Quran.⁵⁶ Consequently, this gives the impression that Islam has higher legitimacy than all other religions, in shaping the Indonesian nation.

The discussion about this principle is often limited to freedom of belief and worship, and usually becomes a topic of debate around the organized religions as established and authorized places of worship. Hardly ever is the important notion of living religiously alongside various faith-based communities, discussed or elaborated on. Unmanaged modernity has

⁵⁵ Sudjito, Hendro Muhaimin, and Agung Saras Sri Widodo, "Pancasila and Radicalism: Pancasila Enculturation Strategies as Radical Movement Preventions," *Jurnal Dinamika Hukum* 18, no. 1 (2018): 70.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

become a factor that is contributing to the devastation of national, cultural, and religious identities across different parts of Indonesia. Those identities are still needed to distinguish a nation from its colonial roots, albeit, in a holistic spiritual perspective like *Kejawen* there is ultimately no such thing as different, mutually exclusive, or essentialized identities. In actuality, a nation needs those identities to contemplate whether their way of life is right or wrong according to the goals and the visions that they have established. Colonial ways of thinking are still prevalent in Indonesian society because of people's dependency on foreign culture and religious values, whether secular or in the form of organized religion. Indonesian people are not yet ready to embrace their own national identity fully, in part because the colonial mindset is perpetuated by the educational system, both the western-oriented elements and the more Islamic teachings. Students from elementary school to high school are merely trained to memorize *Pancasila* which is relatively easy.⁵⁷ However, the interpretation of *Pancasila*, and how it became the key Indonesian national ideology in the first place, and what lies behind it philosophically.

The underlying principle stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System has explicitly mentioned that education should be based on Pancasila and the Indonesian Constitution. It further explains that it is rooted in religious, "national" culture values, and also should be responding to the demands of modern times. However, the politics of religion hinders the recognition and distribution of resources of *Kejawen*, especially in providing religious education for its followers. The law has stated that student has the rights to earn religious education according to his or her religion and beliefs.⁵⁸ But the government seems to neglect such implementation of rights. It is proven from the case of Muslim Hadiguna Putra who is a *Kejawen* practitioner that voluntarily teach the *Kejawen* student in four elementary schools in Cilacap, Central Java, without getting paid.⁵⁹

2.1.5. Remarks

Pancasila reflects the attributes of unity of existence which are inclusive, dynamic, and perpetual. It postulates the struggle to unite regardless of the social and political differences in society. The founding fathers like Soekarno, Mohammad Yamin, and Soepomo foresees the multi-cultural reality of Indonesian people that are naturally hostile to each other if there is no understanding of the common ground that presupposes the contesting values. Esoteric view of *Kejawen* teaching is actually influence the basis of *Pancasila* which today is still become the chief concept to determine the next political project of Indonesia.

⁵⁷ Mudhofir, *op.cit.*, 11.

⁵⁸ Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning National Education System, Art 12. (1) (a).

⁵⁹ Kompas.com, "Cerita Para Pengajar Penghayat Kepercayaan, Mengajar Tanpa Bayaran: Paling Utama Regenerasi," <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/06/21/05450051/cerita-para-pengajar-penghayat-kepercayaan-mengajar-tanpa-bayaran--paling?page=all>.

2.2. Reflecting on Orthodoxy and Heresy

2.2.1. Introduction

This section explains how the politics of heresy undermine the distribution of *Kejawen's* knowledge. The construction of heresy helps to understand the connection between belief systems and social organizations.⁶⁰ In Indonesia, *Kejawen* discourse is intertwined with the Islamic discourse, because many Muslims claim that *Kejawen* is an offshoot of Islamic teaching. On the other hand, *Kejawen* followers also claim that *Kejawen* tenet resembles Islamic tenet, for instance, the principle of *Tawhid* (oneness of god) and the principle of *Manunggaling kawulo gusti* (unity of existence). However, the emergence of a puritan type of Islam, which is influenced by Wahabis, Salafi, and Muslim Brotherhood types of Islam. These Islamic groups reject the existence of *Kejawen* esoteric teaching and insisting the purification of Islamic practice in their organization as well as promulgating the dogma to the public. The moderates Muslims like *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhamadiyah* are supposedly more open to the existence of *Kejawen* teaching, even though in practice they also partially dismiss the radical element of *Kejawen*. The extremist and moderates are fighting for dominance in the social and political, yet *Kejawen* teaching's existence is largely ignored and dismissed, branded as heresy.⁶¹

2.2.2 Caught in Ideological Fight

Since Joko Widodo got elected as the president in 2014, religious politics has been reignited to serve the electoral ends. His consecutive victories have frightened the opposition and it was so monumental that the political parties which are supporting Joko Widodo have an immense political prospect. The situation exacerbates when his former vice governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) took his former office as governor of Jakarta. Some Jakartan Muslims who were supporting Prabowo Subianto (the other presidential candidate) believe that Ahok will not make policies in favor of Muslims, because of his background as Chinese Indonesian and Christian. The situation culminates when Ahok was charged with a blasphemy act after making a statement regarding Holy Quran.⁶²

That major political event is the beginning of the massive polarization of Islam and Muslim societies in Indonesia. This polarization undermines the existence of other religious ideas which relate to Islamic tradition like *Kejawen* and even Shia Islam. Even though it is a political contestation, the parties involved inevitably must construct an ideological basis to justify the norm that they promote. The moderates which lead by an Islamic

⁶⁰ Lester Kurtz. "Politics of Heresy." *America Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 6 (1983): 1087.

⁶¹ Masdar Hilmy, "Towards a Religiously Hybrid Identity? The Changing Face of Javanese Islam," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 12, no. 1 (2018): 51.

⁶² BBC News, "Jakarta governor Ahok found guilty of blasphemy," <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39853280>

organization called *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) which is also a supporter of Joko Widodo administration coined the concept of Islam Nusantara. Historically, the concept was not founded merely because of the aftermath of the 2014 political climate, it existed way long since NU was founded. Basically, Islam Nusantara means a version of Islam that accultures with local values in establishing its jurisprudence. It promotes a version of Islam that friendly and amicable, which also acknowledge and respect other religion.⁶³

However, this pluralistic view of Islam does not merely accommodate all religious views which are distinct from the views of the religious organization, in this case, is NU. As the biggest Islamic organization in Indonesia, NU has the most political significance and contribution in shaping Indonesian politics. Thus, NU must retain its ideological and political boundaries toward a religious view that is too radical like the esoteric teaching of *Kejawen*. If NU tries to embrace a radical view of *Kejawen* like *manunggaling kawulo gusti* and the practice of *shalat daim*, the public will certainly disagree, and NU will lose part of its legitimacy in public. It is because the *Kejawen* tenets have been famous as heretical teaching and the public has been long aware of it. Said Aqil Qiraj as head of NU says that NU will always be right in the center (moderate), NU cannot support the radical right, which is the Wahhabis or the radical left, which is liberal Muslims as well as the follower of *Kejawen*, because their institutional tenet is sacrosanct.⁶⁴

On the other hand, the Wahhabis promote the concept of Islam Kaffah which is translated as 'the true Islam'. This concept only acknowledges the authority of the Holy Quran and Hadith to establish a set of rituals and jurisprudence. It is different from the view of NU which is adding *ijma* or the consensus of Islamic scholars and *qiyas* or the judgment of individual Islamic scholars. The Wahhabis argue that NU has been performing ritual innovation or *bid'ah* which is considered heresy. It excludes any religious practice which does not have a legal basis (*dalil*). Those practices which do not have the *dalil* are *bid'ah*. The *bid'ah* discourse is being disseminated to the people in order to create a chasm between religion and culture. Cultural practices that are already syncretised with Islamic rituals like veneration of saint's tomb, funeral ceremony (*tahililan*), and celebrating Prophet birthday (*maulidan*) are perceived as *bid'ah* and polytheistic which creates sentiment towards the majority of Muslim population who are still practicing those kinds of ritual as well as *Kejawen* practitioner who shares similar pattern of ritual.⁶⁵

In the realm of knowledge production, the discourse between Islam Kaffah and Islam Nusantara breeds competing schools and educational institutions. NU is promoting Islam that espouse local culture, to tackle the

⁶³ Abdurrohman Kasdi, "Islamic Dialectics and Culture in Establishing Islam Nusantara Paradigm: Variety Model of Islam Nusantara for Indonesia," *Addin* 12, no. 2 (2018): 301.

⁶⁴ Nu Online, "Kang Said: NU Tidak Radikal, Bukan Pula Liberal," <https://www.nu.or.id/post/read/27923/kang-said-nu-tidak-radikal-bukan-pula-liberal>.

⁶⁵ Tarik Firro. "The Political Context of Early Wahhabi Discourse of Takfir," *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 5 (2013): 771.

rising Neo-Wahhabis, Salafis, and Muslim Brotherhood school of thought that also building their Madrasah to promote “the true Islamic teaching” without interference from the local culture. The Wahhabis school of thought calls for a “deculturized religion” approach as Oliver Roy mentioned. The term “deculturized religion” postulates to the abandonment of local culture as well as nationalist culture in exchange for modified Islamic culture which has a strong reference to gulf Arabic culture like Saudi Arabian.⁶⁶

In relation to *Kejawen*, both Islamic schools of thought mentioned above are rejecting *Kejawen* as an independent belief system. Thus, they are not really concern about the survival and development of *Kejawen* teaching. Also, the dichotomy of religion (*agama*) and belief (*kepercayaan*) still plays its part in social life. This discourse is perpetuated by the existence of legal products which are not recognizing the existence of *Kejawen* and other indigenous faith. In Government Regulation No 55 of 2007 concerning Religious Education, it is clearly stated that religious education is only provided for Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism.⁶⁷

Three religious groups allegedly considered practicing *bid'ah* in the eyes of Wahhabis. They are NU, *Islam abangan* (a form of Islam that mixed with a great deal of *Kejawen* principles), and *Kejawen* group itself.⁶⁸ However, *Kejawen* group is not explicitly attacked by the Wahhabis in their public argument. The Wahhabis specifically attack NU because of their massive political and social power which is directly competing and opposing the *bid'ah* discourse. *Kejawen* groups are in a dilemmatic position because of the political competition between Nahdlatul Ulama and Wahhabis. The people who think that *bid'ah* is sinful practice would reject and distant themselves from the principle that they think is affiliated with *bid'ah*, thus the people would feel reluctant to learn about *Kejawen* because it is against the popular view of Wahhabis.⁶⁹

The discourse of *bid'ah* has more political overtone than a social one because many agencies use a narrative of *bid'ah* for political purposes. After the political reform and the fall of Soeharto's authoritarian regime, a huge number of new political parties were created. Islamic political parties are also sprouting after more than three decades of being suppressed by Soeharto's iron will. The Justice and Prosperity Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera/PKS) entered into the Indonesian political arena by adopting the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood which can be recognized by its fervent effort to promulgate the idea of *Khilafah* or Islamic state ruled by a single Caliph. Also, PKS opposes the idea of merging Islamic values with cultural practices. Thus, it calls for “purification of Islam” and it gains popularity with that narrative. Because the majority of Muslims in Indonesia come from different types of Islamic ideological backgrounds, PKS cannot deliberately push the agenda of *Khilafah* and “purification of Islam” to win

⁶⁶ Mark Woodward et al.. “Getting culture: a new path for Indonesia's Islamist Justice and Prosperity party?,” *Contemporary Islam* 7, no. 2 (2013): 173.

⁶⁷ Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007 concerning Religious Education, Art. 9(1).

⁶⁸ Hilmy, *op.cit.*, 56.

⁶⁹ Firro, *op.cit.*, 775.

an election and secure seats in the House of Representatives. *Nahdlatul Ulama* as the oldest traditional Islamic organization and *Muhamadiyah* as the oldest modern Islamic organization have distinguished ideologies that would repel PKS agenda if it is done coercively instead of persuasively.⁷⁰

Kejawen discourse is placed within the greater Islamic discourse. Even though *Kejawen* also has Hindu-Buddhist roots, but because of total Islamization in Java since the 18th century and the partition of Java and Bali, the discourse progresses under Islamic principle. Damar Shashangka in his book titled *Induk Ilmu Kejawen* explicitly says that *Kejawen* is a term for Javanese-Islamic spirituality. Other combination like Hinduism-Javanese spirituality or Buddhism-Javanese spirituality falls under the different category which is *Jawadipa*. In fact, not all *Kejawen* practitioners agree about the proper use of the term coined by Damar Shashangka.⁷¹ Most *Kejawen* practitioners do not concern with the term rather they emphasize the principle and custom that defines *Kejawen*. On the other hand, majority of Indonesian recognizes and generalizes *Kejawen* as part of Islam because the majority of *Kejawen* follower borrows Islamic identity in their civil registration matter. The syncretisation process has gone too deep which makes *Kejawen* dependent on Islamic discourse. Thus, the practice of political Islam tremendously affects *Kejawen* survival, even more, the *bid'ah* narrative has put *Kejawen* far more detach from current Islamic orthodoxy.

2.2.3. Remarks

The construction of heresy and orthodoxy between NU and the Wahhabis are undermining the dissemination of *Kejawen* teaching. Not only branding *Kejawen* teaching as heresy but also the endless debate on the discourse between Islam Nusantara and Islam Kaffah greatly captivate public attention. Lack of historical understanding in Indonesian religious dynamic and the tendency of neoliberal economics which serves the capitalist agenda of political parties in electoral contestation are the fundamental obstructions to recognize *Kejawen* teaching as Indonesian religious tradition. An egalitarian approach to the distribution of religious knowledge has to be realized to avoid dominance and monopoly.

3. CONCLUSION

Currently, *Kejawen* teachings seem to be facing the prospect of gradually being discarded through domination of Islamic theology and secular values that leaves little room for syncretism of religious and cultural beliefs, in line with the 'unity of existence' principle associated with *Kejawen*. The public prefers to have one final answer to the questions of human existence, whilst not realizing that other religions may well share parallel, largely similar concepts, based on very similar notions. In this setting, a singular religious doctrine is not balanced by any strong

⁷⁰ Woodward et al., *op.cit.*, 174.

⁷¹ Shashangka, *op.cit.*, 25.

counterpart in cultural or political philosophy that could lead to a syncretic solution such as is generally needed in plural environments. This may imply that Indonesia may be becoming a less plural environment in practice.

A philosophical discussion about the roots of the existence of Indonesia should be encouraged in order to know what are the values that are functioning in the society. This knowledge about the roots of various moral traditions in Indonesia ideally has to be understood by all people, not just the elites who can afford better education. Thus, pre-college education has to be reformed to be more critical in its approach, especially in the moral and religious subjects. In addition, academic freedom should break the construction of heresy and orthodoxy. The transparency of the academic system is crucial for the equal reproduction of knowledge. Minority knowledge and rights should be prioritized, considering their fragility in the economic competition.

The inequality of resources in disseminating and proliferating minority knowledge is the fundamental problem. Stigmatization caused by political and religious figures that trying to polarize the people into two separated groups are damaging the minority narrative, not to mention, it begets conflict and other social problems. The stigmatization continues the inequality of resources because stigmatization equals the moral construction of the public. In this case, *Kejawen* teaching is stigmatized as heretical teaching that rejects or is not in accordance with Islamic orthodoxy in Indonesia. With the approach of critical thinking which postulate s academic freedom, *Kejawen* teaching could retrieve its dignity back as a great spiritual tradition of Indonesia.

Lastly, the struggle to unite people through spiritual tradition is not a new thing. However, the force that divides us is seemingly more powerful because of the greed that has been endorsed by the capitalistic mindset. Therefore, a humanistic perspective is required to deal with the great problem of our time. The human problem cannot be dealt only with economic incentives, other aspects like psychological, spiritual, social, and other human needs and inclination should be analyzed carefully and thoroughly to create a precise and holistic solution to a problem.

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